



## ADOLESCENT AND SCHOOL HEALTH

### WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- Each day 4,400 young people try their first cigarette.
- Daily participation in high school physical education classes dropped from 42% in 1991 to 32% in 2001.
- Almost 80% of young people do not eat the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables.
- Nearly 30% of young people are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.
- Every year, almost 800,000 adolescents become pregnant and about 3 million become infected with a sexually transmitted disease.

### WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

Every school day, more than 53 million young people attend 120,000 schools across our nation. Because of the size and accessibility of this population, school health programs are one of the most efficient means of shaping our nation's future health, education, and social well-being. In 1987, in response to the growing impact of HIV infection, CDC began funding state and local education agencies for HIV prevention education. In 1992, while continuing to provide funding to all states for HIV education, CDC started an initiative to support coordinated school health programs that reduce chronic disease risk factors: poor eating habits, physical inactivity, and tobacco use. In 2003, with funds from CDC's Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion appropriations, CDC supported 22 state-coordinated school health programs. In addition, more than 40 professional and volunteer organizations work with CDC to develop model policies, guidelines, and training to help states implement high-quality school health programs.

#### *Example of Program in Action*

The North Carolina State Board of Education adopted the Healthy Active Children policy which requires physical education/activity in schools (pre- K-8), local school health advisory committees, and implementation of model coordinated school health programs in each local school district. North Carolina's policy prohibits physical activity and recess from being taken away from children as a "punishment," regulates class size, and defines the elements of a quality physical education class.

### WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Health risk behaviors often established during youth such as tobacco use, unhealthy dietary patterns, and inadequate physical activity contribute to adult mortality and morbidity resulting from lung and heart disease, cancer, and other chronic diseases. Research has established that school health programs effectively reduce the prevalence of health risk behaviors among youth. Funded state and local education agencies will continue to provide youth with a healthy school environment and the information and skills needed to avoid these risk behaviors. CDC will help these agencies improve the overall quality of their school health programs by strengthening school health policies; improving curricula and instruction; training staff; involving families and communities in school health education; and evaluating program effectiveness.

*For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit [www.cdc.gov/program](http://www.cdc.gov/program)*

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